

566th Transportation Company in Vietnam

Interview with:

Clifford Wesley Taylor

Jim Darby

Ron Owens

Walter Robertson

Rich Cahill

John Jacobs

Harold Marshall

Alford Hatton

Manny Tellez

Interview by Richard Killblane

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Killblane: All right who was the first one to join the company? [Pause, laughter in the background] Rich would you tell me about when you joined the company and what it was like?

Cahill: I came into the Company about January first; I was a specialist E-5.

Killblane: What year?

Cahill: 1969, from there they promoted me to Sergeant to be on a gun truck.

Killblane: Which one?

Cahill: #363

Killblane: Wait, you joined in January 1969?

Cahill: January 1969.

Killblane: And the rest of you came in afterwards?

Taylor : I came in April [1969].

Darby: March [1969]. In country, that's what you're talking about right?

Killblane: Yes. You [Cahill] joined the 566th at that time; how many gun trucks did they have?

Cahill: Six.

Killblane: Which ones were they?

Cahill: #363 was mine. I forget the other numbers.

Killblane: Did they have names yet?

Cahill: I didn't have a name on mine at that time.

Killblane: What were they like, how were they built?

Cahill: A woodbox, one .50 [caliber], and two [M]60s [machine gun]. Oh I'm sorry, when I got there they only had two 60s and a grenade launcher. We didn't get the .50 till about March. That's right, aye Darby?

Darby: I wanted to take those M60s out and just use the .50s [laughter].

Killblane: When did you arrive?

Darby: Either February or March of 1969.

Killblane: So you were just right behind him [Cahill]?

Darby: Yeah.

Killblane: So who else came in about that time frame?

Darby: Taylor.

Taylor: April 1969.

Darby: Big trouble maker [laughter].

Killblane: All right, so why were they building gun trucks, did they tell you why?

Taylor: No, they just stuck us on it.

Cahill: What the purpose of the gun truck was we had one on the front and one on the back. If we got suppressive fire we're supposed to return to fire and try to get the trucks [in the convoy] by us. That's why we're giving suppressive fire down through the woods. That's what their purpose was for. We weren't supposed to attack; our mission was to back them [the Viet Cong] off from us so they couldn't hurt anybody.

Killblane: Have you heard of any ambushes in the company before you got there?

Cahill: Yeah, I heard about them.

Killblane: The convoy ambushes from the research I was doing....

Cahill: Well see this is my second tour over there.

Killblane: Okay, who were you with the first time?

Cahill: 670th Trans out of Cam Ranh Bay.

Killblane: When were you there with the 670th?

Cahill: '67 to '68.

Killblane: That's a period that I was interested in.

Cahill: I was private when I came over then.

Killblane: Were there any ambushes that came out of Cam Ranh Bay?

Cahill: Oh yeah.

Killblane: When and where?

Cahill: Ban Me Thout Mountains, Da Lat, Duc By.

Killblane: Do you remember when they happened?

Cahill: You're pressing your luck on that; I mean you're talking about forty years ago.

Killblane: Okay.

Cahill: You see when I got over there the first time all we had were M14s, we didn't have M16s. You see I stayed in that area for about three months then I went TDY [temporary duty] to Phan Rang. I hauled bombs and everything else from the beach to Phan Rang to the Air Force Base. I did that for three months.

Killblane: Is that on your first tour or second tour?

Cahill: First tour.

Killblane: Okay.

Cahill: Yeah, the first tour, they didn't have a bridge across Cam Rahn Bay, they had a pontoon boat that you had to use to get across.

Killblane: Part of the reason why I'm asking this because for some reason Cam Rahn Bay was slower at adopting gun trucks than say 8th Group was. I was wondering if there was a specific event that caused them to do it or something else.

Cahill: I couldn't tell you. They had gun trucks when I was over there the first time, but they were just deuce-and-a-halves with wooden benches with two M60s on it and a grenade launcher. That's all they had the first time I was over there.

Killblane: Oh, they did have them in '67-'68?

Cahill: Yeah.

Killblane: All right, so when you got on your gun truck this time were you replacing somebody?

Cahill: Yes.

Killblane: Okay and how were you trained up?

Cahill: They stuck me on the truck [laughter].

Killblane: So nobody explained to you, just learn as you go?

Cahill: That's it; [they said] you're supposed to take care of this.

Cahill: When I became Sergeant, they put me on a "hard truck,"¹ which I generally knew about the .50s and [M]60s anyhow. So what happened is when we trained over or when we brought someone new in, I would train them up on the trucks. So that's how that worked whenever you get a new sergeant in. Darby took my place because I had to stay the whole full year over there, so he was already trained.

Killblane: Okay.

Cahill: We took care of our own people and we showed them what to do and everything else especially if they didn't know how to drive a truck, if you weren't trained to drive a 5-ton tractor.

Taylor: We taught lots in Missouri about convoys and stuff, but there wasn't a damn thing over there what they taught you. [laughter].

Cahill: What they were teaching over here was two different ball games than what you got over there. When over there, it's a different ball game. That's how I learned when I was over there the first time. You learn as you go along. You always had somebody there, when I was first over there I had a Sergeant show me what the hell was going on over there, so the second tour was pretty easy for me. Except for getting shot at....

¹ Original term for gun truck.

Taylor: You got some dates with that ambush because I brought you a letter.

Cahill: Yeah, I was in *Stars and Stripes* over there.

Killblane: Okay. Was there another early ambush in your tour or later?

Cahill: May of 1970, I was in Da Lat. We took a bad ambush.

Killblane: Okay.

Cahill: In fact, we had a *Stars and Stripes* reporter ride on the hard truck.

Killblane: Oh, so that's how he covered that? We might actually be able to find an article.

Taylor: It was in the *Stars and Stripes* magazine over there.

Cahill: You got the copy of the article.

Taylor: I gave you a copy, I got the real poem.

Cahill: I got a picture of where I was standing on the hard truck

Cahill: Now he was interviewing me about Da Lat but he wasn't in Da Lat. We were going to Ban Me Thout Mountains because he asked me about that. And we got hit going up there.

Killblane: We use a term TTP [tactics, techniques, and procedures]; you also call it Doctrine or SOPs [Standard Operating Procedures]. How did you develop your SOPs for your gun trucks? You had to learn it, what did you teach?

Cahill: Guns were already on there I don't know how else to explain it, I don't know.

Killblane: You talked about you had to return fire, someone else I talked to out of Cam Rahn Bay said that one of the tactics you guys used is the lead gun truck would stop and lay down a base of fire then the next gun truck would come up and replace it and keep going.

Cahill: We came up Ban Me Thout one time and got hit. They went after the lead jeep and hit it first. I was behind the lead jeep, awhile back. I went up there and provided suppressive fire. That way the other trucks, I told them to "double down" and they started flying by us so when the second [gun] truck came up, he started suppressive fire then I was supposed to pull out and keep on going; but instead we usually stayed there because it was all coming from that one area and we would put down fire all the way

down. We wanted to make sure the rear elements caught up because they had all our maintenance people in it and all that stuff. Make sure that they got through.

Killblane: When was this ambush, do you remember?

Taylor: May '70?

Cahill: April, I think.

Killblane: April 1970.

Cahill: You had one unwritten SOP, which ever side the fire was coming from, if you were the gunner on the other side you was ammo man. Each Sergeant did his own hard truck differently. When my driver stopped, he got the M79 grenade launcher and fired that. You fired the .50, you had the one M60 and you had the guy giving you ammunition.

Killblane: Did you do like he did; the gunner who's not engaged will supply ammunition?

Cahill: Yes.

Killblane: That's the first time I heard that one.

Cahill: He learned it from me.

Taylor: It's the only way you could keep enough ammo.

Taylor: He's the one that thought me how to run a gun truck.

Cahill: Yes, I did.

Killblane: I think out of Qui Nhon everybody just sprayed, they just assumed that there was bad guys on the other side so every gunner was actually engaging.

Cahill: We just shot on whichever side the ammo was coming from.

Taylor: We didn't fire unless fired upon. They gave us orders not to fire unless fired upon. Hell, we never knew we were getting shot at till they shot us anyway [laughter].

Cahill: You didn't return fire till you found where the fire was coming from.

Killblane: So Jim [Darby], when you arrived and what was your job?

Darby: I drove a 5-ton. I hauled freight and everything too just like everybody else.

Killblane: When did you get on a gun truck?

Darby: After my first year, Cahill was getting ready to leave I had another seven months left, somewhere in that area.

Killblane: Were you picked by him or by leadership?

Darby: I went on the back of the gun truck. [laughter in background] Nah, every once in awhile I would go on one if they didn't....

Cahill: That was a voluntary thing mostly.

Killblane: Yeah, that's what I'm looking at, in some cases it's usually the crews that get to pick who replaces them and there are some cases where I found early on that the officers would pick, that's what I'm trying to figure out.

Taylor: I was picked by Captain Lee.

Cahill: I was picked by my CO [Commanding Officer], Freedman.

Darby: A lot of the crews were picked by whose truck was down and maintenance they had....

Cahill: Kramer Anderson, there was an Anderson when I first got there then he left.

Taylor: One of the other picked me because he called me in and says, "You're a gunnery sergeant now."

Darby: Because when he left he told me to take his truck

Cahill: I was a Spec-5 and they promoted me to hard sergeant

Killblane: Okay, was that because of your previous tour?

Cahill: I have no idea.

Killblane: Okay.

Cahill: He knew I served the first tour. It probably could have been.

Darby: He wanted to keep hard stripes for NCOs only.

Killblane: Did you volunteer to take his place or did someone pick you?

Darby: I was getting tired of driving.

Killblane: So why did you want to go on the gun truck?

Darby: Well, they had all the fun when something happened.

Killblane: Okay, not everybody wanted to go on the gun truck right?

Darby: No, not everybody. Believe it or not, we wouldn't have enough men to make a full crew. Some men in the engineer division would come over and be educated on the trucks and man the M60 or something.

Killblane: So you've been a replacement before anyway?

Darby: Yeah, after Cahill left, I took it over.

Cahill: They took my truck out and his first trip out he [Darby] got hit with a rocket and blew my truck up.

Killblane: Oh really?

Cahill: Sure did.

Darby: Couldn't understand it; I was standing between that hole.

Killblane: When I ask about different types of ambushes, we use a term now, simple and complex. A simple ambush is basically a mine, IED [Improvised Explosive Device], or just a hand full of guys like a squad size unit that, what we called harassment fire, their intent is just to damage vehicles. A complex ambush is where it's a large scale ambush where they actually want to kill a lot of vehicles or stop the convoys and destroy it. So what kind of ambush was that one?

Cahill: Simple

Killblane: Just a lone RPG [Rocket Propelled Grenade], gunner? Okay.

Darby: There was one or two of them but there wasn't a whole lot, I'm not going to say there's ten or twenty of them, just a few of them; small arms fire.

Cahill: He stayed and shot at them while the rest of the convoy went back and I guess they got the number off the truck and he got pissed off and started shooting up everything. So when I took off [laughter], [inaudible 15:31] back part of Da Lat they shot the front wheel off.

Killblane: Wait, say this again?

[Laughter throughout the room]

Cahill: He's gonna blame it on me.

Darby: They got the number off the truck so [inaudible 15:45] they got mad at him so after I took the truck [inaudible 15:48] hit the front wheel and all this other stuff, we couldn't go anywhere and I was wondering how [inaudible 15:58] ... Cahill, you know....

Killblane: This is the same ambush?

Taylor: No, same truck different ambush. He's saying that the VC [Viet Cong] got pissed off at him [Cahill] and he left and he [Darby] took his place and they still thought it was Cahill. [laughter]

Killblane: Oh okay, that's why they're trying to shoot you. This is after you replaced him on the gun truck. So with the damage to your truck what did they do to it?

Darby: My truck?

Killblane: Yeah, you replace it?

Darby: No

Cahill: That's him; I don't know but my truck was fine when I left. [laughter]

Darby: We requisitioned parts and we repaired that truck.

Killblane: When you guys started out you had wooden gun trucks right, wooden walls?

16:45: Then we switched over to steel walls.

16:47: We had one inch steel walls.

16:48: Yeah, we switched over, we changed.

Killblane: When did you change, do you remember?

16:55: Wasn't too long.

[inaudible 16:56-17:00]

Killblane: Who arrived when they had sand bags?

Inaudible 17:10 – 17:15

Killblane: The way I can figure it out is whoever arrived when they didn't have wood that'll give me an idea when they replaced them.

17:24: Cahill got there when it was wood.

Taylor: I did too.

Cahill: I'll say, four months; January, February, March, April, about May is when we switched over to the metal [inaudible 17:36].

Killblane: Okay, so May of 1969.

Cahill: I believe it was about May, April or May, lets put it that way is when we switched over to metal.

Taylor: I know Sergeant Gregg was the first one I went out with when I first got here on a gun truck as a gunner [inaudible 17:52]

17:55: What would happen is when you go down [inaudible 17:57] you pick out what you want [inaudible 18:02] for size....

Killblane: Well that's what I was going ask....

18:05 : Each one is almost basically different....

Killblane: When we look at the design of the gun truck that was a kit. With the portholes....

Taylor: We didn't have portholes in ours.

Killblane: Okay. Where did the metal come from?

Marshall: We stole ours from the Navy. Most of them stole from the Navy.

Killblane: When you say the Navy, did they have stacks of sheet metal?

Marshall: They had stacks of sheet metal; my first time was going down there to [inaudible 18:29] guys to get sheets of metal and we couldn't even budge it so we had to steal the forklift and load the sheets.

18:38: Supplied by the Navy.

18:40: They gave it to us [laughter].

Killblane: Okay.

[Inaudible 18:45 – 18:50] [laughter]

Killblane: So Clifford [Taylor] when did you join the company?

Taylor: April 1969.

Killblane: Okay, and how did you get on a gun truck?

Taylor: I drove a lot of miles on a tractor trailer for a long time, about five or six months. In about 18 months I made buck Sergeant.

Killblane: How long?

Taylor: 18 months.

Killblane: Oh in the Service, Okay.

Taylor: When I went back over, I had 175,000 miles. I drove all around the place.

Killblane: So how long were you in the company before you were picked for a gun truck?

Taylor: Probably about the last part of the tour

Killblane: The last part of the tour?

Taylor: Yeah, then I took a short re-enlistment and came back and I was on a gun truck.

Killblane: Why did you take a short re-enlistment, how long were you going to stay in?

Taylor: I was going to stay 20 until I got back stateside.

Killblane: Okay.

Taylor: I was screwed because I had six years to go. Because I had six and I had to take the short.

Darby: Another thing, I don't know about the other guys but when Cahill left and I knew I was getting a truck moving up to an easier job you know, and if you want to take a nap, you got a cot back there.

Killblane: Say again.

Darby: If you want to take a nap while you're....

Killblane: On the truck, yeah.

20:36: I thought that was nice.

Darby: Wake me up if anything happens. If anything happens, I'm here. [laughter].

Killblane: That's while you're waiting or while you're rolling?

Taylor: How can you sleep on one of those things bouncing around? Man, there's no way I could.

Darby: Well you had that one inch of steel and wood all around and you had two layers of sandbags our 5-ton didn't bounce too much.

Taylor: I didn't have sandbags in mine.

Darby: I had two stacks of sandbags.

Marshall :We put it in there later. After you quit driving we put it in there.

Taylor: I got on a gun truck probably about October to November of 1969 somewhere around there.

Killblane: So about October or November?

Taylor: Yeah, somewhere in there.

Killblane: Rich [Cahill], going back to your gun truck, did you ever name your gun truck?

Cahill: No.

Killblane: Never named it, was your truck named?

Cahill: No.

Killblane: Alright, who named it and what was it?

Taylor: My driver and I both was trying to come up with a name and he was from Vegas so we called it the Gambler, it was pretty simple.

Killblane: What was your driver's name?

Taylor: James Cole, we called him Jim.

Killblane: Okay. Now when you joined, what were you taught, what was your job?

Taylor: When I first got here, Sergeant Gregg [said], "You need to get on here and when you start receiving fire or anything we're going to shoot this way or we're going to shoot

that way and you listen to me” and that’s what I did. After that, I learned a lot from Cahill and....

Killblane: What did he teach you?

Taylor: As far as controlling the environment of the gun truck, keeping weapons clean and all that good stuff.

Killblane: When I ask you these details there’s a reason why, because it’s a lost art. Guys, one of the problems we had in Iraq is .50 cal’s jamming, these guys don’t know their weapons, they may get seven rounds off.

Cahill: They’re probably not timing them right?

Killblane: That’s true, but did you guys ever have problems with that

Group: No.

Killblane: A lot of what I’m asking you is a lost art.

23:07: After Kuwait this guy fired at a wall, boom, boom, boom, boom. I said, “Boy you’re going to get in trouble if you don’t set the timing on this.” [laughter]

23:19: It was so slow, it was pathetic.

23:21: I always fire mine to the max.

Group: Yep.

Killblane: Explain that, you can slow down....

Cahill: You take the timing tool, and you can tell by the clicks, you can tell by the clicks you can feel it. You got to take a knife to it, took me awhile to get it. You know and that’s what I showed these guys and you take it out and there’s another thing I told these guys. I always told these guys we’d go to the firing range; every new crew that came out I took to the firing range.

Darby: Da Lat had a good firing range too.

Group: Oh yeah. [laughter]

Killblane: Okay, now when you guys were engaged, did you fire the six-round burst or did you spray?

24:15: One box bursts.

Group: [laughter]

Cahill: Five round bursts, depending on the situation, I tried to do bursts because I didn't want to melt the barrel down, plus my ammunition, I took all my tracers out.

Killblane: Why?

Cahill: It makes the barrel hotter, especially if you go rapid fire, especially if you use rapid fire. Plus, you seen the tracers go on; you're big enough of a target as it is. That's why I took the tracers out so they [enemy] could not fire back.

Killblane: Okay. Did any of you have to change barrels during ambushes?

Group: Yeah [Laughter].

Killblane: Okay. Did you use head, space, time, and gauge?

Group: Yes.

Killblane: You did?

25:01: You take the barrel off with the asbestos gloves and get burnt and put a new barrel on there nice and cool....

25:07: You're re-gauging it all at the same time too.

Killblane: So you're setting the head space and timing on it; I know the guys out of Qui Nhon usually would memorize the clicks on each of the barrels.

Taylor: I didn't, I used that timing gauge every time.

25:27: I mean you're getting scared shitless but you're still doing it.

Killblane: Okay. What other things were you taught using your guns, on a gun truck.

Taylor: Most of our other guns and training we got was pretty much basic other than the fields of fire and how to control it, and at the same time getting the trucks back.

Killblane: And how do you do that?

Taylor: You just pull out on one side so they can pass you.

Killblane: Okay.

Darby: Your main job was getting trucks out of the kill zone.

Taylor: Right.

Darby: When they hit #363 you couldn't get it out... the front end fell off. [laughter]

Killblane: Say again.

Darby: The little wheel off and everything.

Killblane: Oh, when you were on the gun truck.

Darby: The driver couldn't, he just rode it out on the left hand lane and let the convoy go on by.

Killblane: Now, this policy of the next gun truck coming up and replacing the lead gun truck was that being used when you arrived, or did you guys develop that?

Cahill: We flagged them on, because we couldn't go no where, just go on by and take care of what we have to, you had two of them sitting there.

Darby: It was supposed to be developed through our company.

Killblane: So who developed it?

Cahill: It depends on how much fire you're receiving, that's what mostly it's depended on. How much you're receiving from where you're getting hit at. Say like in a wooded area or something like that but that one time we got hit by a building, so we were restricted to that so it was no big deal.

Marshall: Cahill done it and Captain Hill told us to do that if we were movable.

Killblane: Told you to do what?

Marshall: The next gun truck come up, you try and catch part of the convoy in case they got ambushed and get up front. If you're getting heavy fire you couldn't move your truck.

Killblane: So you would stay and have more gun trucks in the kill zone....

Marshall: Then we would have more gun trucks come up and help each other.

Killblane: So who was the next person to get assigned to the company?

Marshall: I was, I don't know about the company but I was next on the Mortician.

Killblane: When did you arrive?

Marshall: May 05, 1970.

?: The sixth, May sixth...

Marshal: The sixth.

Killblane: May sixth 1970?

Marshall: Yes.

Killblane: Yeah Walt, when did you get there?

Robertson: November 1969.

Killblane: Okay wait a minute, you're an FNG [Fucking New Guy]; I didn't think the old guys talked to the new guys, how did you two hit it off.

Robertson: Well after a couple drinks....

Taylor: Hey, we weren't grunts, man. We were truck drivers. [laughter]

28:21: It was truly a racial riot till these two showed us how big he was. [laughter].

28:27: When you see something that big coming at you, you say, "Yes sir, yes sir.

Taylor: I was on trash detail up there in the company area on the hill, so I had to go down there to get a truck and trailer and take it back up there. He [Robertson] came walking out, and a couple other guys. Whenever I had trash detail when I first got there, I always reached down and get the damn drum, top it off, and set it up on the trailer. Well most of them it took two or three to get the drum up; well this little stud muffin comes up there and slaps one up there and I said, "Alright," [laughter] "that's my buddy."

Killblane: Okay. So when you arrived what was your assignment?

Robertson: I drove a 5-ton; I stayed on the road for about six months driving. I was doing a lot of bobtailing. A gun truck came open and I asked for it.

Killblane: Which one?

Robertson: I named it the Cobra's Den but it didn't have a name on it.

Killblane: Okay, Cobra's Den, why did you name it that?

Robertson: Oh God you don't want to hear that.

Killblane: Oh yes, I do. [laughter]. It may not be fit for print, but we need to know the names behind all these gun trucks.

Taylor: Matter of fact Walt and I got our trucks painted about the same time he got his truck and that's when we named our trucks.

Killblane: Oh so you named them the same time.

Taylor: Just about.

Robertson: Roberts who worked in the maintenance shed could freehand paint and draw real good. He would put designs on the trucks for us.

WR: Not all of them.

Killblane: You told me before that you're fascinated with cars, and that's part of what the Cobra came from.

Robertson: Well we've seen and killed a cobra over there. It was 18 feet 6 inches.

31:08: See, I asked y'all the other night who was it that shot the cobra, and nobody remembered.

Robertson: I don't remember who shot, but I remember the snake.

31:15: Everybody said I did, but I didn't. [laughter]

Taylor: I wouldn't tell anybody either [laughter].

Robertson: It killed a cobra over there.

Killblane: In the compound?

Taylor: No, on the highway.

Killblane: Okay. I heard stories that cobras mate for life, and the mate will try and track you down.

31:37: They were after him. [laughter]

31:39: Because nobody will admit to shooting the damn thing. [laughter]

Robertson: I'll remind them how black they are. [laughter] And I asked for a truck and get it, so then they put the boxes on my truck...

Killblane: So while you were on it they put steel boxes on your truck?

Robertson: That's when I got it; they were putting the box on it.

Killblane: Okay.

Taylor: We fixed two of them like that.

Killblane: Just two, which two?

Robertson: The Gambler and the Cobra's Den had steel boxes on them.

Killblane: Okay. Were those the only two that got steel boxes?

Group: No, no.

Killblane: Later all of them got them okay. So the first two were the named gun trucks.

Cahill: We got our box pretty early, on the #363

Darby: Yeah, because when I took the Mortician it already had a name on it.

Cahill: They didn't have a name on the #363.

Robertson: Y'all had the Gibson and the other guy, the black guy who drove.... the Undertaker. Rawls was packing ours up and I remember I was talking about the Shelby Cobra, so we put the cobra on that had those big wheels and big six on it and had smoke coming out from it.

Killblane: Oh yeah, the artwork from the states. I remember it was like a comic book or a model or something like that.

Robertson: It was on the side of that, I remember before I left the states it had it on the side of a Cobra mustang, and then I put it together.

Killblane: What kind of guns did they have on it?

Robertson: A .50 and two M60s

Killblane: Okay, let me get this straight because I heard some conflicting information, so the Gambler and the Cobra's Den were the first two with steel boxes on them?

Cahill: Last two.

Killblane: Okay, who was the first one?

33:43: #363 was one of them.

33:47: Mortician I guess, y'all put the steel box of the first Mortician didn't you?

Cahill: Who? I didn't have a name on it.

33:51: I know that, but it was named Mortician after you....

Darby: Oh, after I got on it, yeah okay.

33:58: Yours had the wood boxes on it; I do remember that. So the first steel boxes as far as our company went on the Mortician, on Cahill's truck.

Killblane: Cahill's?

Cahill: They named it after I left.

?: No we took the name off.

Cahill: The official truck showed the wood with the name Mortician on it.

Killblane: So Rich [Cahill], after you left, they put the steel box on it?

Group: No.

Killblane: They named it after you left?

Group: Yes.

Killblane: Okay and they named it to what?

RC 34:39: Mortician, I think.

Killblane: You were on that then?

Darby: We didn't have no name on it at all when I was on it.

Killblane: So they named it after you left too.

Taylor: They didn't have a name on the wooden box?

34:54: The wooden box said Mortician.

Marshall: We have a picture of it with the wood box Mortician on it.

35:00: When the steel box went on, there was no name.

Killblane: Okay. What about your truck, what was it?

Marshall: It was the same truck, #363.

Killblane: Oh, so when did you join, who was on it with you?

Marshall: They left and I went on.

Killblane: So you [Herbert Marshall] replaced Jim [Darby], what was your job on it?

Marshall: .50

Killblane: Did you replace Jim, or did you replace someone else?

Marshall: No, Jim. He's the one that left us and Captain Hill put me on the gun truck.

Killblane: Okay. What was your rank at that time?

Marshall: I made Sergeant. I had joined several gun trucks before that one though.

Killblane: As member of the crew or as a filler?

Marshall: Sometimes as member of the crew, sometimes M60 gunner, sometimes .50 gunner.

Killblane: Were you permanent crew or were you replacement crew?

Marshall: No, I was a replacement. Permanent crew after Darby left.

Killblane: How did you get on there, volunteer or what?

Marshall: Captain Hill put me on it.

Killblane: Why, do you know?

Marshall: Because I've been on gun trucks quite a bit.

Killblane: How did you get on the first time?

Marshall: They just told us, Sergeant Williams put me on the first time.

Cahill: Sometimes we did not have enough people.

Marshall: Sergeant Cahill brought me down and showed me the .50s. and I was just a replacement for gun trucks. We had four in the company?

Cahill: Yeah.

Marshall: We had six early. We lost some and we ended up with four gun trucks

Killblane: Just four, what happened to the other two?

Marshall: I don't know; that one got blown up June the third when I was in it. But I've only been around three to four weeks.

Killblane: That's 1970?

Marshall: 1970.

Killblane: Okay. Which gun truck was blown up?

Marshall: The one with the casket on the side, with the headstone, I don't what the name of it was.

Robertson: Mortician?

Group: No.

Taylor: Undertaker or Grave Diggers.

Marshall: It was Undertaker, Grave Diggers or something. It was an old multi-fuel.

Killblane: John [Jacobs], I haven't asked you, when did you arrive?

Jacobs: Well, this is one of the crazier parts [laughter]. When I arrived in country in the middle of December 1969, I was assigned to 557th light maintenance. A week later we headed out to the beach, you had to go by the firing range in Cam Rahn to get to the beach. One of the Trans unit had their hard trucks out there and I asked, "What the hell is that thing?" They're lighting up these barrels on the hillside, and I thought, "Man wouldn't that be something." And the guy next to me said well you can go play on one of them. And I said, "Oh yeah right;" he said, "There's a clip board in the day room." So when we came back from the beach I looked and there was a clip board full of dust with a busted pencil, I sharpened the pencil, blew the dust off, and signed my name. The next day someone picked me up and took me to the driving range to see if I knew which end of the M60 the bullet came out.

Cahill: The little end. [laughter]

Jacobs: And I'm pretty sure it was Sergeant Cahill that took me out because after that he said that I had at least hit the hillside [laughter] or something.

Cahill: Or point it in the right direction. [laughter]

Jacobs: He came back alive from that test fire. I ended up going out the next day right away and I made the first run. All the Trans units in Cam Rahn from when I got there in December, from my first run in late December or right around the first of January of 1970 to when I left in November of 1970 about the same time Jim left, all the Trans units used, well it's a shitty term but volunteers or fill-in gunners; and that's what I was because I could not get my CO at 557 to approve transfer to any of the Trans unit. So I ended up tactically going around and come back and put my name down. I kept the dust off the clipboard at the 557.

Taylor: He watched too many John Wayne movies. [laughter]

Jacobs: Yup. I thought I was going to live forever being 18 at that time and made my first run right before Christmas or after Christmas, with Sergeant Cahill up to Da Lat, and the battle was on from there on. I'm pretty positive I made a run or two with the Four-Four-Deuce but 99 percent of the run with these guys with Five-Six-Six. Which was good for me because people that were in my position, if there were other crazies that kept going out you know, a lot of guys went out once and said the hell with this shit. I just kept going back but when we got back from a run I can just jump off the hard truck and, "See ya," no cleaning, no nothing, I was gone and I was back at my hooch, passed out at the bottom of the hill and these guys still had a lot of work to do. I had a big advantage there but....

Killblane: Oh because you were a volunteer.

Jacobs: Yeah, I was a fill-in gunner.

Killblane: Now, let me ask you, did you get assigned to different trucks each time?

Jacobs: Yup.

Killblane: Now that's interesting because it's out of Cam Rahn Bay that you guys used non-TC [Transportation Corps] gunners. That was unique to your organization.

Cahill: I loved the personnel they used to give us too [sarcasm].

Darby: They came out of finance, came out of personnel, and they came out of supply.

Killblane: Anybody remember Colonel [Edward] Honor, the Battalion Commander?

Group: No

Killblane: Okay. Well anyway, one of the books I was tasked to write was his biography and he was telling me about it. The problem is when you put a gun truck out there you're taking away drivers and trucks. The way he got around it was borrowing gunners from

other units, now you guys are explaining to me about how they actually worked out. Okay now, how many of the actual crew were part of the company.

Taylor: Me and my driver.

Killblane: Okay. So the other two gunners...alright, so that's why all you guys end up replacing someone you end up being the .50 gunner because you're the NCOIC [Non-Commissioned Officer in Charge].

Group: Right.

Killblane: Now, that makes sense. So tell me about the other gunners.

Cahill: No, don't let him tell anymore [laughter].

Killblane: Okay, okay, how did they work out, you're a regular; you keep signing up, were there any others like that?

Jacob: You're still an FNG the first time out. It's pretty easy to get the NCOIC busted down to E-1 in a heart beat. We just taken off from the lower reservoir at Da Lat, there was an urban deuce-and-an-half parked around the side of the road weapon down, I was looking at it as we were pulled out and one of them squeezed off a couple rounds right next to me; and I swung that M60 and that's where I got my first nickname over there. It was "God Damnit." [laughter]. "Don't you fire that God Damn weapon." [laughter] It scared him and me both to death because I was ready.....

Cahill: Here it is, just made sergeant and gonna get busted E-1, E-2. Hell, I'll be damned.

Jacobs: Well I learn quick, cause all the way up to Da Lat and back, "God damn FNG on my truck again" [laughter]. It didn't scare me off. It showed a 18-year old green ass kid who had only been in country for a few weeks this was the real deal. It took somebody with the experience of a Cahill because if you were unlucky enough to go out the first time with somebody with a head up their ass in charge of a hard truck, I can't even imagine that. But somebody like him, he cut a guy straight from day one, maybe that's what kept me coming back, I don't know.

Killblane: So what was your nick name?

Group: "GD."

Jacobs: "God Damnit" [laughter].

Killblane: Okay.

Jacobs: He nicknamed me "God Damnit," but then eventually when you left and then after he left, the next round I made was with Jim [Darby], because Jim took over that

truck and that's when he stuck me with "JJ." That was the thing that always bothered me the most by going out and being on different trucks, coming back, and jumping off and skidaddling. To this day I feel a lost because I don't have the camaraderie that these guys have after they changed the tires, cleaning everything up, went back there in the hooch to drink and fight, and I didn't have that. So it's a different type of feeling I thought, but at the same time....

Killblane: But you also weren't a permanent member of the crew.

Jacobs: No, I wasn't even part of the company. And now the craziest thing is for me is when I tell the VA [Veteran Affairs] that there's no damn paper trail from a clipboard hanging in the day room....

Killblane: At least I can validate for you....is there anyone that's gonna say that he wasn't on a gun truck...

Group: No

Cahill: I would be the last one to say that he wasn't on my truck. He gave me a heart attack. One thing was funny. It was chickenest thing that I have seen in my life. We were in a fire fight one time, and we started shooting up the mountain. Well, I had a guy from finance. Well he got down in the corner and he put his head between his legs and we're receiving fire and I'm going to town. So here I take the other gunner and I put him on the other side and I use him. He wouldn't even get up and give us ammunition, he was too damn scared.

Killblane: Was that the common pattern with the finance types?

Cahill: Yeah, I found out it was.

Robertson: They didn't even know how to load the damn M60.

Cahill: He knew how to load mine.

Robertson: One guy in my truck looked at me and had rounds in upside down. All they want to do is eat up the damn C-Rations.

Group: Yeah! All the time. Eat, eat, eat!

Cahill: He road back in the 5-ton and I threw him out of the truck. Tell him where we got hit at. I was talking with JJ because he came along with us. The machine gunner on the right hand side got shrapnel and the M60 on the left hand side, shrapnel went through and blew the gas plug off so it wouldn't work. So I had one guy on the M60 and he was trying to fire from where I was firing from, I said no you watch your side and see if you can make contact and he said, "There's a whole bunch of people over there." I said, "Don't kill them all, just shoot over their heads." The other guy who was reloading me

on the .50 and I was shooting on the left hand side. I thought for sure it was JJ with us because he was an engineer boy.

Killblane: So all these guys were volunteers, they had to sign up for it, but they didn't measure up. Other than JJ here, were there others you found that kept coming back?

Marshall: Most of them would not come back.

Jacobs: I was the only guy....

Taylor: I was praying for one to come back but he never did. [laughter] Mince meat. Hit me with the barrel in the back of the head.

Cahill: I threw one off the back of the truck and he rode back with one of the drivers.

Marshall: It got so bad on our deal to get gunners, we had to get the Navy to volunteer with us to get away.

Killblane: Oh really, the Navy volunteered?

Marshall: Lots of Navy volunteered.

Killblane: How they turn out?

Marshall: A couple of them were good but the rest of them wouldn't go back. They just volunteered to get away so we didn't have to show them how to use the guns before we left. Captain got some Navy volunteers; the Navy lived under the hill under the mountain we was on, so we got to know some of those. They had plenty of manpower and we didn't. Matter fact, I wanted to go out as a gunner for a good long while.

Killblane: Okay Ron [Owens], when did you get assigned to....

Owens: See, you're talking bout Buck Sergeants here now; they were the gunners and NCOIC. I was a driver.

Killblane: When did you arrive in the 566th?

Owens: July 21st 1970.

Killblane: July 1970; did you immediately get on a gun truck?

Owens: No, I was in a tire shop for a month. You wouldn't believe the bullets I could've sent home. [laughter] And this guy in charge of the tire shop said, "Believe me, you don't want to go out there on the road." and I said believe me that's what I'm over here for.

Killblane: Why?

Owens: Well, the first truck they gave me, I had a multi-fuel and the stake tore up until they got the Macks in. Then they gave me #341. [It] finally came out the shop. The first trip out, I ended up staying with an Artillery unit there over night. The first action I saw, man I was scared as hell. The CO said, "We'll come back through tomorrow and pick you up, on the way back." I didn't want to wait till tomorrow morning. I wanted to go then, at midnight. I was already to go home. I didn't like that. But anyways, they came back and picked me up and went back. The truck ended up back up in the shop for a transmission or something, so what do they do? They stick me on a gun truck because my truck is in the shop.

Marshall: I got him because I needed a gunner and a driver.

Killblane: Wait, so you became the driver on...

Owens: No, I was just a gunner he had a driver.

Killblane: Oh, so you were put on as a gunner.

Owens: My truck was in the shop and had nothing else to do, so I went out as a gunner.

Marshall: So I kept him.

Owens: So he thought me how to take the M60s and the .50s apart, time them and do everything to them, put them back together, clean them and everything. My truck came back out of the shop. The first trip out, tore up again. So they stuck me on his gun truck again and after that I said, "Why won't y'all just go ahead give me one?" So then I became a driver.

Marshall: He did not get stuck on it. I asked for him.

Killblane: Okay wait, so you were put on as a gunner on there, so why did you ask for him as a [driver]....

Owens: Well actually I ended up as his right hand man....

Marshall: Because he had the nerve to sit there and fire without laying his head down on the damn metal.

Killblane: Okay.

Owens: You didn't see me like that?

Marshall: No.

Owens: You don't remember that?

Marshall: We had a lot of fun and friends and we all said that we'll live together and die together, and that's the way we joked around to tell you the truth.

Owens: Then I ended up driving the truck.

Killblane: Okay, let's back up. So on that first night out there RONing on that artillery base camp, you were scared, what was it like on gun trucks?

Owens: You had a big ole thick piece of metal with wood inside that will stop a bouncing bullet. Where do you sleep on a soft cab truck? Up on the top, it's soft. So I'm sleeping away and all of a sudden, "BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!" and I'm like, "What, what?" And this guy came running by and said, "If you want to live you better get you're A [ass] out from up there." So I went out under the truck and another guy came around and says, "If you want to live you better get your A in this bunker." [laughter] So I got in that bunker and that's where I stayed till the next morning. [laughter] I'm not lying about it, I was scared.

Killblane: That's where you're supposed to stay in a firefight.

Owens: I smelled dookie for the next two days. [laughter] I was ready to go home, man. They couldn't hit the broad side of the barn you know, they could shoot you a box out there and you could put some paint over that but they couldn't hit any of us, not very well.

Killblane: You mean they couldn't hit you in the gun trucks?

Owens: Hell no, man they couldn't hit the broad side of the barn.

Darby: I probably couldn't either because I couldn't see them.

Cahill: You could see the marks on the outside where they hit you.

Owens: They had bullet holes all up in the guns, tires....

Killblane: So you felt safer on the gun truck then?

Owens: Well, yeah.

Marshall: We really and truly made fun out of every day unless we were having problems. This goes for all the guys, we didn't look for dying every day we, had fun until action started, when you had to be serious you were serious and when you wasn't you wasn't; the rest of the time you enjoyed the convoy.

Owens: Then we'd go in at night and make fun of each other, "I saw you, I saw what you did."

Marshall: "I saw you piss your britches."

Owens: "What's that wet stuff in your pants? I smell dookie."

Marshall: We really made fun out of a lot of stuff and enjoyed it.

Killblane: Okay, there's one gun truck company I was interviewing, I'm actually planning to write a book on these guys, in Iraq and they describe the same thing. I remember from when I was in the Army, everybody's like kids, just big kids having fun but man when the shooting starts it like someone just hit a switch then you all of a sudden go professional. Then as soon as it's over, the switch goes on and you go back to busting on each other.

Owens: We was talking a couple of months ago on the phone and I asked him [Marshall], "If you to would you to go to Iraq?" and he said, Yes, if I could get the same men I had in Vietnam, I'd go." I said, "I agree with that. If we can get the same people, I wouldn't want to go with strangers."

Cahill: If you had officers who listened to your ass, it would be a good idea.

Owens: They would do what they was told, didn't they?

[Hatton walks in]

Cahill: Hatton was a gunner over there also.

Killblane: Oh, what's your name?

Hatton: Hatton, Alford.

Killblane: Okay, when did you arrive?

Hatton: Harold [Marshall] and I got there the same day, May 6th, 1970.

Killblane: What was your job?

Hatton: Well, I drove trucks for about four months.

Killblane: And then what?

Harold: Then I made acting Sergeant, then Captain Hill put me on a hard truck.

Killblane: Which one?

Hatton: I took over the Hijacker after Owens got through with it, after he wore it out [laughter].

Owens: You know why that truck was named that?

Hatton: It was already named when I took it over

Owens: It was the fastest truck in the unit. Muse said, "That thing is a running rabbit ain't it?" I said, "Yeah, it is," and he painted it on it.

Killblane: Who named Hijacker?

Owens: I did. Well David Muse did, his truck was Joker. He was 2nd platoon and I named it Hijacker, and David said that's a running little thing right there man, that's the fastest truck we got. He said you ought to call that thing the Hijacker instead of the Rabbit. I couldn't catch on what he was talking about but he was talking about that Monroe Shop with the rabbit, I said alright and he painted it on for me.

Killblane: What's the name of the guy that called it that?

Owens: David Muse, his truck is not even listed out there on that list.

Killblane: What was his truck's name?

Owens: Joker.

Killblane: Okay, was he NCOIC of it, or driver?

Owens: Driver

Jacobs: He got the pictures of it.

Owens: I don't have any pictures of it, I sure don't.

Jacobs: None of the box, just the cab. They're posted on the gun truck site.

[Tellez walks in]

Cahill: Tellez was over there, he was an E-6.

Killblane: Say you're name?

Tellez: Manny Tellez.

Killblane: When did you arrive in the company?

Tellez: May 15, 1970.

Killblane: What were you assigned initially?

Tellez: Second Platoon.

Killblane: As a driver or on a gun truck?

Tellez: I was a driver first for two months then went to the tire shop and became a squad leader.

Killblane: What was your rank when you went over?

Tellez: Specialist-5

Killblane: Did you ever go on a gun truck?

Tellez: Yes, with Hatton.

Killblane: Okay when, same time?

Tellez: Same time.

Killblane: So when did you go on the gun truck?

Tellez: Well.....when did you quit driving, I can't remember.

Owens: I quit driving right before I came home because I wanted to make that trip up north moving there with Four-Four-Deuce, Aviation. I came back July so it had to be May or June of 1971 because I drove that truck right on up. I was driving before Christmas '70, wasn't I? I drove that truck a good seven or eight months. Because when I got it, it had nothing on the sides.

Tellez: Something like that, when I got it, it didn't have nothing on the side, you already had all that done whenever I started.

Killblane: So why did you give up being a squad leader to be an NCOIC of a gun truck.

Tellez: No, I continued being a squad leader and they made me a Platoon Sergeant, acting E-6.

Killblane: Oh, so you did both duties, when did you become the Platoon Sergeant?

Tellez: About half my tour.

Owens: About the same time I did.

Killblane: What was your rank when you went over?

Owens: I was an E-5, when I went over I was E-4.

Killblane: Okay.

Marshall: I was PFC [Private First Class], I never did even get my E-4 before I went to the E-5 board, because there was no squad leaders left.

Killblane: So you became a squad leader when?

Marshall: It was probably October, '70.

Killblane: You stayed as squad leader the whole time. Which squad?

Marshall: I took over 3rd Platoon in January, 1971.

Cahill: Did you take Williams' place?

Marshall: SGT Buley took Williams' place and he went home because and went AWOL. And they let me take the platoon over. I was never an E-6.

Killblane: Okay, so you were an E-5 Platoon Sergeant.

Taylor: I wonder who else done that?

Marshall: He did go for no reason. His wife divorced him that was a good reason.

Killblane: Let's chronologically try to go through the major ambushes and what happened. For the 566 what was the first major ambush that you guys participated in.

Darby: The one I remember is the one that Cahill was hit. I've heard of some but never seen any.

Killblane: But you're the oldest person to be riding on a gun truck, what was the first one you guys had?

Cahill: We had one where they fired on the lieutenant.

Killblane: You're talking about when he was in the lead jeep?

Cahill: Yeah.

Killblane: The lead jeep was hit by what?

Cahill: Small arms fire.

Killblane: Lieutenant was the convoy commander?

Cahill: Yeah.

Killblane: What was the damage done to the vehicles?

Cahill: None.

Killblane: Where were you at, headed up Ban Me Thout?

Cahill: Yeah

Killblane: Where did the small arms fire come from?

Cahill: From the woods.

Killblane: Alright. You guys are going to have to bear with me. I know QL 19, the road usually runs to Ban Me Thout, it's either the mountain is on one side and the valley is on the other or it's the other way around. So the high ground is on what side when you got hit?

Cahill: The right side, low ground was on the left side. We were going north, high ground was on the east side and low ground was on the west side, or the tree side.

Killblane: You were heading to Ban Me Thout and in this case the high ground was on the left side and small arms fire came from where?

Cahill: Left side.

Killblane: Above you then?

Cahill: Yeah.

Killblane: About how many bad guys?

Cahill: Couldn't be too many, just small arms fire.

Killblane: Probably squad size?

Cahill: I'd say about six or seven.

Owens: They couldn't hit the broad side of a barn....

Cahill: All we did was lay down fire, so no big deal.

Killblane: Any other gun trucks besides yours get involved?

Cahill: Well, everybody was firing their weapons out the windows.

Killblane: Okay that brings up a question. So the tactic at that time for the drivers was to return fire right?

Cahill: Yeah.

Killblane: Okay. So you pulled off the side of the road and they're driving by you returning fire, did that present a problem?

Cahill: It didn't for me.

Killblane: They're shooting over your head? I had some drivers get hit by drivers driving by firing.

Cahill: At the present time I wasn't worried about what was behind me, only what was in front of me. It did not cause me no problems.

Owens: Your ears were burnt out listening to the guns over your head.

Marshall: Most of time in the mountains you didn't have time to return fire, shift gears, stay in the convoy either. There were very few places you could actually shoot....

Killblane: So was the jeep disabled?

Cahill: No.

Killblane: Did they keep going?

Cahill: Yeah.

Killblane: So tell me what you did then.

Cahill: Well, he was already there and he had a M60 gunner was on the back. All he was doing was laying down fire. When we pulled up we started taking over what he was doing, he took off. Then I would motion for the other guys to get by me to come on and hurry up. Then when I seen the other truck coming up, I told the driver to pull out.

Killblane: So when the next gun truck came up behind you....

Cahill: I don't know if he returned fire or did anything else.

Killblane: Alright. Anybody wounded in that?

Cahill: Nobody was hurt.

Killblane: Alright. You have any idea when it happened?

Cahill: No.

Killblane: Okay, so when was the next ambush?

Taylor: The one I remember was the little cat house that sat out between the hills, we were going up....

Killblane: You were headed out to where?

Taylor: I think we were going out of Da Lat going towards Ba Lak.

Killblane: Another thing I forgot to ask, is your gun truck always followed behind the convoy commander?

Cahill: No, not always.

Killblane: But in this case it was?

Cahill: Well that was Lieutenant, the convoy commander was the one going up front, he was a captain; I had a Lieutenant in the jeep.

Killblane: Okay. So where was your gun truck in relation to the convoy?

Cahill: I was behind him.

Killblane: How many gun trucks?

Cahill: It was him, me, and then the convoy behind me. He was way ahead of me; I don't know why he was going all the way up there. The driver got excited or something, he sped up and left us. I guess he thought we could just catch up like that. He was more ahead of us then he should've been.

Killblane: How many gun trucks did you have in your convoy at that time?

Cahill: As far as I know, four.

Killblane: How many trucks?

Cahill: There's about 25 in each, so about 50 trucks. I remember sometimes we took a hundred up.

Killblane: Do you have any idea when that one took place?

Cahill: June I think, dates I'm not too good with.

Killblane: So this went to Da Lat?

Taylor: I can't remember if it was going to Da Lat, I know we had been to Da Lat but I can't remember if we were going out toward Bae Lak....

Cahill: We were coming into Da Lat I think and there was a big brick building...

Taylor: Coming back.

Killblane: Okay, so Rich....

Taylor: Anyhow, what I remembered is that the road kind of went around and curved back and the cat house sat out there, and there was a little trail that went down to it. There were three or four NVA [North Vietnamese Army] inside having a good time and they were pretty well snookered the way they looked because they started firing on the whole damn convoy. There was a gun truck up in the lead, one in the center of the turn, and one on the back.

Killblane: Okay, let me back up before you get to that. So Rich, you were in that convoy too?

Cahill: Yes.

Killblane: Alright. How soon after you took over the gun truck did that take?

Taylor: This was probably two to three months after I got on.

Killblane: How was the convoy organized?

Taylor: We did it by units, what they did was divide the trucks up by how many trucks you had.

Cahill: All the ammo and dry goods went first, then the tankers second, then on the back you had the trail unit.

Killblane: Okay. Where were you guys, where was your gun trucks?

Cahill: I think I was behind the CO that day wasn't I?

Robertson: Yeah, you've been first march unit.

Taylor: You were on it too.

Robertson: Yeah, second march unit.

Taylor: I was on the ass end. Yeah, I know we tore that house apart. Spotter was called in.

Killblane: So where was your gun truck?

Taylor: Trail.

Killblane: Trail of the lead march unit?

Robertson: Back, the maintenance trail.

Killblane: All the way back. Walt, where was yours?

Robertson: I was in the second march unit with the tankers.

Killblane: Where at in the second march unit? Was there a gap between the march units?

Taylor: Yeah, a little bit of a gap to separate the freight from the petroleum.

Cahill: Just in case anything happens.

Killblane: How many gun trucks in the lead march unit?

Taylor: Just the one.

Cahill: You had the one behind the CO, then you had one in the rear and ...

Robertson: 360 had some gun trucks too.

Cahill: You always had a gun truck in the front and back on each lead, so if you had three elements you had six trucks, if you had four elements you had eight.

Taylor: I think I was in the lead of the maintenance section.

Cahill: Yeah, Maintenance had theirs.

Killblane: So when the enemy opened fire....

Cahill: They fired at Captain, who was it...Lee? Well, anyhow we let lose.

Killblane: Captain who?

Cahill: Who was leading that convoy?

Taylor: I'm thinking it was Freeman.

Robertson: Freeman was the short fat one.

Group: [laughter] Yeah.

Killblane: Was he in the lead?

Cahill: Yes, he was in the lead.

Killblane: So you were right behind him then?

Cahill: Yeah, I started to return fire.

Taylor: The moment I'd seen him pull over down towards the front or up at the top of the hill, I was coming up. He pulled over and he stayed.

Killblane: Who stayed, Walt stayed?

Taylor: Richard stayed. He went on up a little ways and Walt pulled up in the middle of the curve, and I came up behind him and all the trucks kept on getting.

Robertson: We were trying to get all the tankers out, because you was the trail unit. We had mogas, JP4, kerosene, and diesel.

Killblane: So only your three gun trucks stopped in the kill zone?

Robertson: The 360th truck, I remember they had some problem with the gun or something and he couldn't fire, so I told them to go the fuck home and stay there.

Taylor: But I remember hearing on the radio that the spotter plane called back and called [Captain] Freeman and asked him if we needed air support. The spotter radioed back, "No, the house looks like a damn sifter already." [laughter]

Robertson: That's when the three MPs [Military Police] came back and got their tire blown off, and caused a wreck, and that's what caused us to stay even longer. The MPs led the front of the convoy and had a V100. They came back down and the tire went flat or something and we sent the wrecker truck up to hook it up and get it out of there.

Killblane: So, the V100 was leading this convoy?

Taylor: Normally.

Killblane: In this one did you have a V100?

Robertson: We had MPs in a V100 leading us.

Killblane: But this convoy did have a V100.

Robertson: It did.

Killblane: Okay, what did they do?

Robertson: When they found out we were getting hit, they came back though we didn't need them, but they came back. Somehow the front tire got flat; I don't know if it was shot out or what but we had to stop. The wrecker was in the trail. It had to come up and hook it up. The way we were coming up it made the wrecker in an awkward position; you had to hook the front of it to get it out of there. It was still smoking, so we kept on smoking them.

Killblane: How many minutes were you engaged on that building before these guys got out of there?

Cahill: It seemed like seven years.

Taylor: Only a couple of minutes.

Cahill: Not even a minute I don't think.

Killblane: Okay. So it only took a couple minutes for the last gun truck to come up?

Group: Yeah.

Cahill: I don't know, I was too busy shooting.

Taylor: It was pretty well spread out around the hill there; we had a line of fire on it from all three directions. I mean I was close enough to the building that my driver could've sat me down right through the window. There were a couple of them trying to sneak out the back but they didn't get anywhere.

Killblane: Were you in the position to see them try to get out?

Taylor: Yeah.

Killblane: So it was your gun truck that stops them?

Taylor: On the back side, I don't know if anyone was trying to get out the other side

Cahill: They couldn't get out on any of the sides the way the ammunition was firing.

Killblane: Okay, where is this cat house in relation to the hill?

Taylor: It was kind of a rolling hill like. It was sitting on a little road trail that went down from the room and it was sitting on a knoll out there by itself.

Killblane: Which side?

Taylor: It was on my left I think.

Cahill: It went right around that curve and he screwed up when he started firing because all the trucks were positioned to nail the hell out of him.

Taylor: He picked the wrong time.

Killblane: Okay. You were coming around the curb?

Cahill: See when you go around the curb it sat there. So in other words you had the whole convoy going around, you have a lead truck here like me, then on that rear side you got my rear end, and then you have him [Robertson] coming up behind me so when he fired we had all the trucks sitting there. So he screwed up when he started firing on us and we all fired back at one time.

Killblane: Alright what was the second major ambush?

Darby: About two weeks later when I was on a truck

Killblane: Where were you headed?

Darby: Da Lat, back side.

Killblane: What do you mean, back side.

Darby: There's two ways to get to Da Lat. You come up the front side with the trees and stuff but the back side is escalated a little bit different.

Killblane: Whose gun truck was involved in that one?

Darby: #363.

Killblane: How many trucks?

Darby: We were had a march unit [inaudible 17:46] the rest of them trailers.

Killblane: Say again?

17:51: Trail units.

Killblane: Okay. What was in the trail unit?

18:00: There were a couple of trucks that had to be worked on and they were at the head of it. We were between them and the whole truck unit and they had about 12 bob tails with them.

18:20: The trailer unit picked up broke down trucks or built up trucks; that's all they did.

Killblane: That's why I was asking, would you carry a wrecker with you?

Group: Yes.

Killblane: That's interesting because the guys out of Qui Nhon, I have found, never took a wrecker with them.

18:45: In a trailer unit you had a lead jeep, gun truck, then you had a tire truck, five to ten bob tails, then you had a couple of flat beds back there, then you had a wrecker behind that, then you had a gun truck, and a maintenance truck.

Killblane: Okay, let me get this, you have a lead jeep, a gun truck, a tire truck; that's just a five ton loaded with tires, five to ten bob tails, a wrecker, then a maintenance truck. The maintenance truck, what was that?

19:33: We had a couple empty flat beds in the back in case one of them broke down and you had to put it up on the trailer.

19:43: We called them piggy back trailers.

Killblane: Okay, I've seen the same thing in Iraq too. It's too long to tow a vehicle so you put it on a flat bed. Now the maintenance truck, what was it? Because there was a truck designed with a box in the back with all the tools, was this just open?

20:21: It was like a deuce and a half, the best I can remember.

Killblane: Okay, and you just put tools in it?

20:24: Yes.

Killblane: So tell me about the ambush, you were the gun truck on the trailer?

20:32: Yes. We came into low ground down here. We went into a dip and coming back up they were on the far side of the dip and the truck before [inaudible 20:50] took small arms fire; it blew the tire off and I didn't know if Canada [driver] was trying his best to keep it on the road. It took him almost 75 feet to get stopped, no brakes.

Killblane: Okay, so the B40 [RPG 2] blew....

21:13: The left truck wheel came off.

21:17: And my boy got hit by the side because he was standing over the box.

21:24: They were probably trying to get in the door and into the box too.

Killblane: Was the terrain on the hillside or was it flat?

21:33: When we get down, [inaudible 21:37] a heavy pole on the left hand side, I've seen when they shot the thing, I'll stand up between the boxes [inaudible 21:51]; and there was a guy on the M60 here and another guy on the M60 over here, somehow this guy over here got shrapnel to chest and some on his face.

Killblane: Which gunner was it?

22:07: Right gunner.

Killblane: Okay.

22:12: The left gunner was trying to shoot but he couldn't shoot because the shrapnel blew the gas plug off of it. So the one that got shrapnel, I run him down to where the driver was and the other one [left gunner], I switch him over to the right hand M60 and the guy with the shrapnel came back up and said he wasn't hurt, then I had the guy on the left hand side was from Engineer Company. I got him to change out the ammo cans; we went through about 1200 [M60] rounds through that much time.

Killblane: How large of an enemy force was it?

23:20: I don't know. [inaudible 20:19] you couldn't see it, I didn't know if they were using the bamboo rocket launcher or what. Like I said, you only saw it when the rocket took off and headed towards you.

Killblane: How many rockets?

23:33: One.

Killblane: So when you finished firing was there any enemy return fire, did that end the fight?

23:44: Well, it did for them I don't know how they got out or whatever, I laid out enough rounds to kill all the trees stuff around them. If anybody else was in the back they would've got it too.

Killblane: So the trail party continued driving past you and you stayed, so when did you leave the kill zone?

24:11: We brought the wrecker down and it hooked onto us and dragged us on to Da Lat.

Killblane: So when the enemy fire stopped, then the wrecker came back....

24:20: He was on the back of the trail unit for some reason and he was [inaudible 24:25]

24:30: A lot of the times they will go last.

24:34: By that time I didn't have any more shells [laughter]

Killblane: Oh, so you ran out?

24:39: Yeah, I ran out, used about 11 or 12 boxes of .50's

Killblane: So that's why you only fired 1200 rounds, because that's all you had.

24:47: Plus both of the barrels had been warped [laughter], they were brand new, I couldn't believe that.

24:55: Jim, when was that one, what was the date?

Darby: It was about two weeks or so after Cahill got hit.

Jacobs: Yeah, because I was going to say about the 18th of June; no, it would've been quicker than that because June 27th is the one I'll always remember that was going up to Ban Me Thout. Charles Pedigrew [Pedigo] was the driver from the 360th.

Killblane: So this one was before or after?

Jacobs: It was before June 27, 1970. A couple of weeks before that is when you took over....

Killblane: So you taken over this gun truck a couple weeks before?

JJ 25:44: From Cahill left and Jim [Darby] took over.

Killblane: So that ambush Cahill was in, the one you just described, Cahill left after that?

Group: Yes

Killblane: So the next Ambush after this was 27 June. Who was involved in that?

26:45: There were two guys from the 360th [POL], it was Sprinkle, he got shrapnel, and I remember James Roper...

Killblane: What was the organization of the gun trucks, who was lead gun truck?

27:01: I was on the trailer on that one so I don't know who the lead gun truck was.

Killblane: So Walt was trail gun truck, where was yours JJ?

Jacobs: From what I can remember, that's when I made my one and only run with the 360th but I don't remember which one it was. The truck I was on was maybe 400 yards back....

Killblane: The 360th was with POL so you'll always be far back, you'll be in the rear march unit.

Jacobs: But that tanker was up ahead of us just toward the bottom of the pass [inaudible] 27:45-:52 before he came through the left corner cab and in front of the tanker; Pedigo jumped out.....

28:03: It stalled the tanker.

Killblane: Is this when Pedigrew [Pedigo] was killed, I got the date on that.

Jacobs: Charles Pedigrew [Pedigo], June 27. You already know that one.

Killblane: But I don't have your version of it. In fact who was the convoy commander, I'm wondering if Wayne Patrick was convoy commander. I think he told me about that.

28:30: That was a Four-Four-Deuce convoy.

Killblane: He was upset about it because he lost a driver

Jacobs: All I know for sure is that it was June 27. I don't know who I was with on what truck but that was the only run I made with 360th.

Killblane: Cliff where was your truck?

Taylor: I'm thinking mine was rear of the first section because he was back, back behind us when he was hit.

28:55: If he was running how did he get killed?

Jacobs: He started running off then when he looked back his right shoulder he started to roll backwards and spun around, jump back, and jumped in the cab and set the [inaudible] 29:09] break and that's when the son of a bitch popped.

Killblane: Wait, you said what popped?

Jacobs: That's when that JP4....

Killblane: Oh yeah, it was his own fire; he got out and revved it....

Jacobs: He was gone, he was clear and he didn't have a scratch on him, he jumped back in and set the break and poof.

Killblane: In those other convoys you guys had air cover?

Group: We had spotters.

Killblane: Right but I think on this one you didn't have. Was this a return trip?

Group: No we were heading out to Ban Me Thout.

29:50: We were fully loaded.

29:51: Just on the bottom of the hill and started up.

29:55: Just enough of an incline that when you jumped out she started rolling backwards and jumped back in and she popped. The hard truck I was on was at most 500 yards back from when that thing popped.

Killblane: Okay, did you see his truck get burned up.

Group: Oh yeah.

30:55: We came back two or three days later to go back to Cam Rahn the tractor was gone and the tanker was still sitting there, it sunk all down in and there still was flame coming out.

Killblane: Was that a single RPG [Rocket Propelled Grenade]?

Group: Yeah.

31:20: I was surprised how that fire went straight up instead of spreading out, that was unbelievable really.

31:26: That was a tough cab

31:28: I always figured that it would spread out and get everybody but it didn't.

31:38: But that puppy really sank down.

Killblane: What other gun trucks were in it, you guys mentioned some names.

Group: No

Killblane: Okay, so it was just you guys then.

32:01: When we went out with another outfit like Four-Four-Deuce or 360th or whoever, normally their gun trucks will take lead positions....

32:10: And they would stick us in the trailer.

Killblane: Why is that?

Group: Inaudible 32:14

32:19: That was a dirty spot.

Killblane: Now 566th was S&P or 5-ton?

32:25: S&P

Killblane: Oh okay, you would be further back. You put the 5-tons up front.

32:34: We were all 5-tons.

Killblane: 5-ton Cargo?

32:40: All the gun trucks were 5-ton cargo.

Killblane: So why does 442 always go up front then?

32:47: Well they didn't, they're captain was leading it.....

Killblane: Oh okay if it's their convoy commander they'll put their guys up front; okay that makes sense. So what is the next ambush you guys remember?

Taylor: There was one going up to Da Lat, kinda went around the corner near the top and one of the gun trucks got hit in the fuel tank with a B40 right on the edge of the road it popped over the edge and there was trees there. That's the one I was telling you I thought it was night and it was his gun truck that got hit. He got shrapnel in the cheek of his ass and he went across the hood and passed the convoy going up the hill.

Killblane: Who?

Taylor: I think his name was Knight.

Robertson: A black guy named Knight and there was another guy named Gibson that drove on that truck too.

Killblane: Knight, what was his job?

Taylor: He was NCOIC of it; he was sitting on the box going to the cab when it went off.

Robertson: He was on fire wasn't he?

34:19: Yeah.

Taylor: I was coming up to him and somebody had pulled over up front and was firing back on them because they were right there on the end turn. There were a few rocks around the edge there and there was more fire from .50 caliber tracers coming up from across the crest of the hill.

Killblane: So who was in this ambush?

Taylor: I was in it.

Killblane: Where was your truck?

34:50: It was our company but I can't remember who else was in it.

Killblane: Which company was lead?

34:56: 566

Killblane: Okay, 566 was lead serial. Where was your gun truck?

Taylor: I was probably the first gun truck in the tankers and he was the last gun truck in the lead element.

Killblane: So he was right ahead of you then.

Taylor: He was a jeep in-between us but we was back a little bit.

Killblane: Okay. Did anyone get killed in this one?

Taylor: No, just wounded.

Killblane: What about the driver, is he okay?

Taylor: Yeah, he's okay.

Killblane: How much damage to the gun truck?

Taylor: Pretty well tore up.

Killblane: Do you remember the name of the gun truck?

Taylor: I'm trying to remember, it had to be either the undertaker or the grave digger or something like that

Killblane: Oh okay, that's the one you said with the coffin on the side. Okay, so you said it was a B40 followed by small arms fire?

Taylor: Oh there was a lot of small arms fire.

Killblane: What did your truck do?

Taylor: I pulled out to the side then once we got up close to him....

Killblane: Small arms fire was coming from which side of the road?

Taylor: Left hand side, right down, the road crest over a little bit and there are trees and rocks all in there. There were three guys, guy with a B40 and an assist or whatever; they only got one round off. Then up on the hill across the little valley there on the other side of the railroad tracks on top of the crest there was a .51 caliber up there.

37:23: I don't remember TET in 1969 most of the VC were killed and there were very few.

guy with a: I think it was in [inaudible 37:34] Da Lat was their R&R [rest & relaxation] center too.

Killblane: Okay. So you drew fire, the B40 hit the gun truck in front of you and disabled it, the crew left, what did the gun jeep and your truck do?

Taylor: We pulled out to the side back so we can get trucks in, around, and out. The jeep kinda went ahead of it and put suppressive fire down the hill and I was shooting up the hill.

Killblane: Okay. So he went ahead and you pulled in behind?

Taylor: Yes, out on the shoulder road that's where Cole pulled out.

Killblane: Any other gun trucks join the fight?

Taylor: Not till later but it was pretty much over then.

Killblane: So the rest of the convoy kept passing and by the time the next gun truck came up it was over?

Taylor: Yes. Cole put a .79 round right in that group three that fired the B40.

Killblane: Okay. That took care of those guys, what about the .51?

Taylor: That .51 couldn't quite make it down there.

Killblane: What was the next ambush?

39:08 Song Mau.

Killblane: Alright, you're heading to Sung Mau?

Group: Yes.

Taylor: Is this the one where I turned the truck over when I was fire team leader that day?

Killblane: So you turned over....

Taylor: My gun truck was in the shop, it was the transfer or something, they put us on a tractor trailer, and Cole was driving the truck and I was fire team leader in the lead section.

Killblane: You were driving that day?

Taylor: No I was passenger and I had the .79.

Killblane: And Cole was where?

Taylor: He was driving, we didn't have no gunners.

Killblane: Who else was in this ambush?

Robertson: I was.

Killblane: Where was your truck?

Robertson: I was probably in the middle of the lead section, I think we had ammo in it.

Killblane: Okay, so the 566th was leading out that convoy?

Group: Yes.

40:40: This was like our second time going down there because we weren't allowed to go down that far.

40:45: It's not too far out from Saigon.

Killblane: Okay, Walt where was your gun truck?

Robertson: I was lead truck in the second march unit.

Killblane: Now if the 566 is the lead march unit why are you in the second march unit?

Robertson: I was told too.

41:08: They would space the gun trucks out.

Killblane: Alright, so maybe they were short a gun truck or something.

Robertson: Sometimes all the units will bring their gun trucks too, cause see I didn't run all my convoys with 566; I'd be told to go with 670th Trans, Four-Four-Deuce, or the 360th Trans. You weren't assigned a special spot all the time

41:32: Just wherever they told you to go to.

Killblane: Okay. So what happened?

Taylor: The best I remember a round went off and Cole...

Killblane: Small arms?

Taylor: Mortar or rockets or something, it fell short in the field.

41:45: It was rockets.

Taylor: This hit off to the right and he turned and went down the ditch.

Killblane: So they were shooting at you?

Taylor: I don't know, all I seen was the rocket hit 100 yards ahead of us. He ran off the damn road and hit that ditch and I thought he was going out to the field

Killblane: The only reason I asked, that eslax 42:23 story you told me, it really seemed that they liked you guys. [laughter]

42:31: Could be. [laughter]

Killblane: So what did Cole do as soon as saw the round hit?

Taylor: He turned to the right and went down and I started going out to the field with it.

Killblane: Why?

Taylor: I have no idea; other to get away from it. Anyhow, he turned back to the left and came up to the road; it was slow motion from there on.

Killblane: What happened?

Taylor: My foot was pinned on the barrel of the M79 and the heater vent on the truck.

Killblane: Oh it rolled?

Group: Yes

Taylor: And if it haven't been for that bolt hole on that spare tire I wouldn't be here telling you anything.

43:26: Brand new truck....

Killblane: Oh. You're First Sergeant must've loved you for that one.

Taylor: No, he loved Cole better than he did me.

Killblane: What else happened?

Robertson: We pulled around up to where the truck had rolled, I returned fire. The one unit had an APC mounted on a box, I don't remember who it was, but they pulled up besides us and started firing. Do you remember that gun truck with the APC on it?

44:11: Yeah, Mr. Clean, was that the one?

Robertson: Might have been. They pulled up there and started firing too.

Killblane: Where they behind you or ahead of you?

Robertson: Behind us. See when the truck rolled I pulled my gun truck up there to kind of shield the front of the truck.

Killblane: Was your gun truck the first one on the scene?

Robertson: Yes. I was up there returning fire then they were trying to get them out. Then we finally stopped firing, then the trail unit got the trucks straightened out, got everybody out, then we went onto Sung Mau and they hit our ass again that night. That's when they had [inaudible 45:12].

45:15: I don't remember the rest of the trip but the dusted my ass off and set me back to 14th AP

Killblane: Did you get a purple heart for that?

Taylor: Hell no. [laughter]

45:28: You only get a purple heart if you get hit in the ass.

Killblane: Actually, believe it or not, any injury that requires medical attention whether it breaks the skin or not; you break a bone or whatever as a result to enemy fire qualifies you for a purple heart. But as I'm finding most of you guys are turning them down unless you were shot.

45:52: Really and truly we didn't know what a purple heart was when we went over there.

Taylor: That's another thing; I had a scratch on this side and a little piece over here scratched. I didn't know there was shrapnel in there; my foot hurt so damn bad I didn't care about anything else. But I guess they wiped it off and put a band aid on it.

Killblane: Okay, so who pulled all these guys out?

Robertson: I don't know I was on the gun truck; I remember Cole got to them but I don't know.

Killblane: Okay, so your gun truck pulled up and provided covering fire and the enemy was where?

Robertson: To my left.

Killblane: How many guns?

Robertson: That I couldn't tell you?

Taylor: Cole was also pinned across the door on the driver's side and they go him out first.

Killblane: Who was pulling these guys out?

Robertson: I know the maintenance crew [inaudible 47:13] gets up there. I remember looking back over my shoulder once or twice seeing [inaudible 47:17] but I was concentrating to keep them covered.

Killblane: Okay, it was maintenance. So the rest of the convoy cleared the kill zone. Then the trail party came up and they recovered.

47:30: I know we had cover fire that day from choppers. [Inaudible 47:38]

Robertson: They did come. Two cobra gun ships came down, I remember they were stacked. One was down low and the other was on top of; the first one did all the firing because they were a little low.

Taylor: I know when they had me on the stretcher I was sitting out there sitting up and a medic or somebody took my boot off. Some officer or sergeant was sitting out there told me that blood was coming from my boot.

Killblane: What? [laughter]

Taylor: When they cut that boot off, if any blood came out and half of my foot was gone, they'd give me a forty-five.

Killblane: Okay, I know what you're talking about, right.

Taylor: Then the God damn helicopter, once they slid me across there they didn't tie the stretcher down and he took off and started red lining and banked, "We gotta get out of here before they shoot us" [said the pilot]. Please don't slide anymore [laughter].

Killblane: How did Cole do?

Taylor: He went on the convoy. They just got him just enough to hold him in there.

Killblane: So he wasn't hurt that bad?

Taylor: No. What they told me [the VA] if you didn't have any follow up, concerning that particular injury or knee problem or anything like that there is no connection.

Killblane: Look guys, that's bullshit. Look, I got service connected because I got rear ended on a jeep and no follow up but my back is messed up so I got disability. They're just bullshitting you.

50:13: Does it have to be in a combat zone?

Killblane: No. Not for service connected.

50:16: I got blood all right there and I was in Germany.

Killblane: No, my injury was in Germany too so no.

50:26: But we weren't fighting over there though

Killblane: Not for service connected but for PTSD [post traumatic stress disorder] yes but not for an injury.

Taylor: Some of my injuries that I did get were in result from PTSD.

Killblane: Okay, what's the next ambush if anyone can remember?

Marshall: The biggest one I got in was June 3rd 1970, it wasn't an ambush but my truck hit a land mine. I believe I was running Four-Four-Deuce. And a guy named Tex Meddlin was driving for me.

Killblane: Okay, what happened?

Marshall: We hit a land mine.

Killblane: Anyone injured?

Marshall: Robertson came down and helped me up he was screaming "I'm coming through!"

Killblane: Anybody injured though?

Marshall: Yeah, my back got crushed and I had a lot of problems and I'm trying to get service but I'm service connected anyway. I thought I got shot in the back...

Killblane: Did anyone get medevaced?

Marshall: No. They tried to get me medvaced but they couldn't and they ended hauling me back in the truck.

Marshall: This one when I was telling you about the flip. That was July 5, 1970.

HM 52:26: The VA tells me that day on June the third that it didn't happened. I got hurt on June the 16th hit on the bottom of the damn swimming pool. I got a letter stating that fact.

Killblane: Stating what?

HM 52:38: That I got hurt June the 16th hit in the bottom of the swimming pool.

Killblane: Who wrote that letter?

Marshall: The VA wrote it back I don't know.

52:44: You don't know where you got the information?

Marshall: Who the hell seen a swimming pool over there? [laughter]. [inaudible 52:52] I got my letters and I know what happened and I don't care. Captain Free was my Captain then but I was with four-four-deuce and I don't know which Captain that was.

Killblane: Okay, what happened to your gun truck?

Marshall: It was no good anymore.

Killblane: It was destroyed. Did they re-build it?

Marshall: No

Killblane: What was the name of your gun truck?

Marshall: The Mortician was the one I was assigned to later that I ran with all the time.

Killblane: But that truck, what was its name?

Marshall: I don't know what its name was.

Killblane: Okay. So you were assigned to another gun truck?

Marshall: No, I wasn't assigned to another gun truck then I went back to driving for awhile then. I got switched back and forth on gun trucks because that's the way things were.

Killblane: Okay, now your truck, where was its position in the convoy?

Marshall: It was probably towards the front because we didn't hit no ambush.

Killblane: That's why I was asking because you probably had to be in the lead.

54:42: The worst battle we thought was going in a TTP [trailer transfer point] and drop those trailers in the sandpit

54:48: No breaks on the trailer.

54:50: That was a bad place.

Killblane: Alright, any other ambushes after that or is that probably it?

Marshall: My fuel tank frame cut in the afternoon on the Mortician; I don't remember what day, it was in '71 and the wrecker definitely came and got us.

Killblane: What Happened?

Marshall: A rocket came through the fuel tank and went through the left frame; all the left frame was gone.

Killblane: And you were what job?

Marshall: I was on the .50

Killblane: Okay, you were NCOIC

Marshall: Meddlin stayed my driver most of the time.

Killblane: Was there any incidents?

Marshall: Some of them got blood spots from where the piece of the metal went in but it was nothing to show.

Killblane: Okay, so the Mortician was destroyed?

Marshall: No.

Killblane: But you said that it cut the frame in half.

Marshall: It did, we tugged it back, cut a frame out and welded it and put a fuel tank on it from another truck [inaudible 56:09] and put it back on the road the next morning and that's a fact.

Killblane: Why?

Marshall: Because we needed the gun truck out there.

Killblane: I asked that because I was told that out of 8th group that the enemy had a bounty on gun trucks, so the maintenance guys wanted to make sure they could put these trucks back on the road to show the enemy that they couldn't destroy them. So I was wondering why you guys put it on the road so fast.

56:39: We had some cutting torches down there and welders.

56:43: No one ever told me there were bounties on those trucks [laughter].

56:50: We had a \$500 bounty on our truck.

Marshall: Anyways we got that truck built back up, we went ahead and put a fuel tank on there, [inaudible 56:58] helped fixed it, you helped fix it, Hatton helped fix it, and some more guys; we all worked on that truck to get it ready for the convoy the next morning.

Killblane: Who all helped?

Marshall: Cessna, Hatton, and several boys from the motor pool.

Killblane: So other guys on other gun trucks came over and helped you rebuild it, why?

Marshall: We all helped each other out.

Killblane: To you guys it may be second nature but when I write this to someone who hasn't been over there....

57:39: We wasn't thinking about no bounty with the VC; we just wanted our trucks running.

Killblane: I can describe the camaraderie of the gun trucks everybody will always help each other but I don't want to say it I want hear that's what it was.

57:53: We were brothers.

57:55: We needed the trucks.

Killblane: If any other gun trucks had trouble everybody else came out to help, right?

Group: Yes

58:02: We would've got out there in the morning to help load ammo, help load guns and everything on each other's trucks....

Marshall: And if you ask me why I kept him [Meddlin] he was a good gunner and I wanted to keep him.

Taylor: What about that night in Ban Me Thout, I think you were there, when the 175s went off that red alert about two 'o clock in the morning, sappers came in.

Killblane: That was on perimeter?

58:44: Yeah, it was in between the common area....

Killblane: On Ban Me Thout?

58:50: Yeah.

58:57: [Inaudible 58:57] 13 guys got killed, they said 12 but it ended up being 13 it's in the magazine.

Killblane: Wait, which unit?

59:13: 566th, it's Sung Mau but I...

Killblane: Wait, I thought you said Ban Me Thout.

Taylor: We were at Ban Me Thout at this one, it was Red Alert, sappers came in the wire and got the communications bunker.

Killblane: But your gun trucks were on perimeter?

Taylor: Yeah.

Killblane: When you guys are on perimeter, do you have one person up sleeping or 100 percent security?

59:39: It was pretty much 100 percent security up there on red alert.

Killblane: Okay, on red alert. Tell me what red alert was.

Group: When the enemy's in the wire, inside the compound.

Taylor: We were sleeping and had our cots in the conex box and unfortunately it was facing the 175 compound, Big Bertha. We were sleeping real good until it went off [laughter].

Killblane: The sapper blew up the ammo?

2:00:19: No, Big Bertha....

Killblane: Oh, Big Bertha went off.

Robertson: Big Bertha Farted.

Taylor: Then wadding came in and peppered our ass and we finally got out of it. We were standing around seeing what's going on trying to figure out where we were at. This sapper comes by with nothing on and says, "No sweat GI." Then he was gone.

Killblane: And you saw this?

Taylor: Yeah, and we were trying to get our heads together, we couldn't hear nothing. All I remember is him saying, "No Sweat."

Killblane: He said that, you're not joking?

Taylor: No, he said that; he didn't make it back to the fence.

01:11: That's when that tank retriever caught on fire, wasn't it? I had to haul damn thing down on a 5-ton truck and it weighed 68 tons. [inaudible 01:20] Cam Rahn.

Taylor: I don't know the exact date but I know it was raining like hell.

Killblane: Okay, in this one was there any damage?

Taylor: The como bunker.

Killblane: Did you guys have anything to engage at or were you just on alert?

01:52: Just on alert.

Killblane: Okay, so there was not a follow up attack.

02:08: Just harassment.

Killblane: What's this about the 13 getting killed in Sung Mau?

02:14: We had just got in and unloaded the convoys and went to grab a bite eat; we got under some of the trucks.

02:22: That's when the fireworks started.

02:24: I mean it started, the whole damn ammo dump and it was raining.

Killblane: You were there Walt.

Robertson: Yes.

Killblane: Who else was there?

Group: Walt, Cliff, Hatton, and Jim were there.

Killblane: Okay, so Owen you were there on what?

03:06: He was driving a truck, we were all pulled up and stopped and unloaded when all this happened.

03:15: We put all the ammo in the ammo dump....

Killblane: Who was not on a gun truck besides Ron [Owens]? Okay, so everybody else was on a gun truck.

03:23: We already got off the gun trucks; we were doing nothing but trying to get out of the rain.

Killblane: Then what happened?

03:32: All the ammo dump went and we all tried to dig our ass in the ground because it was everywhere.

03:37: Before you can get on a gun truck you had to make sure you can make it for the tractor trailer; if you couldn't make it through that they didn't want you.

Killblane: 13 KIA [Killed In Action] but it's not your guys that got killed right?

03:57: No, we knew several of them. They told us it was 12 but according to later news it was 13 and according to the magazine it was 13.

Killblane: So what did you guys end up doing during the attack?

04:06: Getting the gun trucks armed and ready to go

04:17: We got up and got our trucks and everything to get ready to get the hell out of there.

Killblane: Okay, so you guys just wanted to get out of there, that's at night right?

04:28: Late evening.

Killblane: So you were planning to roll the next morning?

Group: Yes.

Killblane: Okay, so you just went through the normal procedures then?

Group: Yes.

Killblane: Anything else, any other attacks?

Taylor: Well later that night, they had a little small brawl in the village and that's when it went out; it was dark.

4:44: There was something else that night.

Taylor: I went out through town and some MP jumped on there and said lets go and we took off and I had that damn....

Killblane: What were you doing going downtown?

Taylor: The MP said lets go, I guess they had some guys out in town or something.

Killblane: Oh, they wanted a gun truck?

Taylor: Yeah.

Killblane: What did the MPs have?

Taylor: A jeep and the one that got on a truck had an M79.

Killblane: So a jeep asked your gun truck to follow them?

Taylor: Yeah, they had three or four of them.

Killblane: What did you see when you went down there?

Taylor: A few tracers every now and then that was about it. But when Cole went to turn down a side street there were three or four GIs standing around in civilian clothes they've been down partying I guess. Anyhow, I was standing out by the MP on the front over Cole's shoulder in front of the box and this little ass from finance jumped on the .50 and grabbed a hold of it and for some reason he spun around and smacked me on the back of the head and knocked my ass out [laughter].

Killblane: Did you guys engage the enemy?

Taylor: No, we fired a couple rounds.

06:25: I remember the next morning we were pulling out all the dead gook bodies out and have them stacked on the side of the gate there.

06:32: [inaudible] bypass [inaudible]

Killblane: Who stacked the bodies?

06:41: [inaudible], the MPs, somebody.

Killblane: I know the Koreans liked to do that.

06:46: They did all the time.

06:45: [inaudible] claim the bodies and get them too [inaudible]

Taylor: I'll tell you the ROK [Republic of Korea] Soldiers were the best we ever run crossed.

Killblane: Yeah, they liked to stack the bodies on the side of the road to show off what they've done. That's why I asked this, was there any ROK's in the area?

07:09: Yeah, they were probably some ROK's in there. They had artillery [inaudible 07:16]. We serviced three ROK groups, we befriend all of them.

Killblane: Any other attacks after this?

07:35: We got several smaller attacks after that but small arms didn't amount to nothing.

Killblane: But no ambushes?

07:39: No.

Hatton: I was with four-four-deuce one time we got hit going up to Ban Me Thout and I think it was after that.

Killblane: What was it?

Hatton: [inaudible 07:50] with four-four-deuce that I made a trip but I can't remember when it was. When we were going to Ban Me Thout and we stopped at the compound down at the bottom.

Killblane: Hatton, you went to run with the four-four-deuce as what?

Hatton: On a gun truck.

Killblane: Which one do you know, was it named at the time?

Hatton: The Hijacker.

Killblane: Okay.

Hatton: I was at the middle of the convoy and we had stopped to take a little break and we were fixing to take off till we started getting fire. It was on the right side.

Killblane: Hit by small arms fire?

Hatton: Yeah and I think there were some rockets that came in. I remember some guys laying in the ditch firing; we were just fixing their trucks and these guys were fixing to load up and take off, so some of the guys were still out of their trucks standing around....

Killblane: This was in the pass?

Hatton: Down at the bottom.

Killblane: Okay. What did your truck do?

Hatton: Well we just sat there and put down fire till everybody got fired up and got the trucks all started and everybody just haul ass.

Killblane: Is this where they wait?

Hatton: Yeah, staging.

Killblane: Okay, you came under fire in the staging yard.

09:36: Well not necessarily a yard, more like a road.

Killblane: You're right, I mean a place you stop and wait for clearance to go up the hill. I think that's also where you link up with your air cover.

Group: Yeah.

Killblane: That's when you get clearance to go up the hill, so while you were waiting you got hit by small arms fire. So the reaction was to get everyone out of there?

Hatton: Yeah, [inaudible 09:59]. Once everybody got back in their trucks we got them cranked up and took off.

Killblane: So basically you waited your turn to leave; it's not like the gun trucks stayed there to engage them, you waited your turn and took off.

Hatton: Yeah.

Killblane: Any damage?

Hatton: I can't remember, I think some of the trucks got shrapnel and small arms stuff. I don't think anybody got hit.

Killblane: No KIA [Killed in Action] as you remember?

Hatton: Right.

Killblane: Any idea when that happened?

Hatton: No

Killblane: Any other attacks?

Taylor: One more, does anybody remember coming off Da Lat coming down the hill, [inaudible 11:03] that's where you went across the bridge at the train tracks? We fired off a couple rounds. My gun truck was blocked coming in claymore alley, that's what we called it I guess.

Killblane: Your truck was which one?

Taylor: The last part.

Killblane: You were the trail or last serial?

Taylor: Last truck in the lead convoy.

Killblane: Okay.

Taylor: We got stopped in there; a lot of trucks stopped.

Killblane: Stopped where?

Taylor: In that claymore alley, a little clay hill on both sides of the road. Somehow the trucks stopped, everybody was looking around and all I've seen was grass float over and seen those little black spots and come to find it was only a stump.

Killblane: Oh the stump [laughter].

Taylor: The spotters called in and said, "You better get your drivers and trucks out of that god damn valley because there's a whole battalion [of NVA] coming up on the other side of that hill; they'll be there in about 15 to 20 minutes, get them out of there."

Killblane: It was what size enemy force?

Taylor: Battalion sized.

Killblane: Did you guys receive small arms fire?

Taylor: Yeah, a couple rounds.

Killblane: Any other attacks?

/End